(140 cont.)
moving along the ground. Headed by their leader they all continue to sing the song of the serpent, saying more or less the following: "I am the snake. I drag myself along the ground. I do harm to no one. But he who dares to step on me because I am on the ground gets his punishment. I bite him and wound him. At times I kill him. He has to stay in bed and suffer for a long time as a punishment for having trodden on me and for thinking that I am helpless because I drag myself along the ground...." This song is repeated several times. [141]

IX

Maretwa and Wamutí

or

Notions of Good and Evil

Through all the preceding chapters we have tried to explain clearly what constitutes the magic life of the Guajiro, which is almost the same as saying his spiritual life, and in passing we have mentioned the presence and activities of beings with higher powers than ordinary mortals, able to do good or evil according to which being intervenes in each particular case. We have thus touched on two fundamental ideas: good and evil.

Our interest is now concentrated in trying to elucidate the quality of these spirits, or supernatural beings. These can be very seriously confused owing particularly to the influence of acculturation and more specifically to the pressure exerted by missionaries in their proselytying function. So great is the misapplication of terms and concepts in this world of ideas that we might call the religious, that even the Guajiro mythology has been transformed by the use of terms which have a pejorative and degrading effect on the Guajiro people (68).

68. This statement is based on the legend which we obtained orally from

[141 cont.]

an Indian of the Nazaret locality relating to Mareiwa and the origin of humanity, in which are presented the beginnings of the different groups of mankind: natives and foreigners. The legend states that Mareiwa created mankind and gathered them together, inviting them to a banquet. Those who complied with the forms of social etiquette (shaking hands respectfully, sitting in the right place, behaving with composure, eating according to civilized rules, using knives and forks, washing hands, etc., were turned into arijuna ("white," civilizado); those who misbehaved, who did not comply with these rituals of social etiquette, that is, those who showed they were Indians, were from that time classed as wayú ("Indians"). As can be seen, the Indian believes himself superior [sic] to the White because of these details of social etiquette, of which he is partially or totally ignorant. [142]

The problem arises from the fact that those two notions of good and evil, represented by two classes of spirits, benign and malignant, have been changed for the Catholic or general Christian concepts of God and devil, concepts which the native, coming more and more in contact with the Christian type of civilization has gradually come to accept in the process of his conversion to new ideas.

This affirmation is corroborated by various citations, taken from the writings of Catholic or Protestant missionaries as well as from those of travelers or of ethnologists who have been involved in the same confusion. To demonstrate the point we transcribe several such cases.

Father de Carcagente referring to the church at Manaure says: "The Indians say to God 'Have pity upon us.' They know